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# Quotes about Language

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The language of truth is unadorned and always simple.

- Ammianus, Marcellinus

I do not mind what language an opera is sung in so long as it is an language I do not understand.

- Appleton, Sir Edward

All true language is incomprehensible, like the chatter of a beggar's teeth.

- Artaud, Antonin

A special kind of beauty exists which is born in language, of language, and for language.

- Bachelard, Gaston

Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire.

- Barthes, Roland

All official institutions of language are repeating machines: school, sports, advertising, popular songs, news, all continually repeat the same structure, the same meaning, often the same words: the stereotype is a political fact, the major figure of ideology.

- Barthes, Roland

If everything is perfect, language is useless. This is true for animals. If animals don't speak, it's because everything's perfect for them. If one day they start to speak, it will be because the world has lost a certain sort of perfection.

- Baudrillard, Jean

Never resist a sentence you like, in which language takes its own pleasure and in which, after having abused it for so long, you are stupefied by its innocence.

- Baudrillard, Jean

No language is rude that can boast polite writers.

- Beardsley, Aubrey

Drawing on my fine command of the language, I said nothing.

- Benchley, Robert

One can say of language that it is potentially the only human home, the only dwelling place that cannot be hostile to man.

- Berger, John

Because language is the carrier of ideas, it is easy to believe that it should be very little else than such a carrier.

- Bogan, Louise

The English language is rather like a monster accordion, stretchable at the whim of the editor, compressible ad lib.

- Burchfield, Robert

The downtrodden, who are the great creators of slang.

- Burgess, Anthony

Language is a virus from outer space.

- Burroughs, William S.

Everything can change, but not the language that we carry inside us, like a world more exclusive and final than one's mother's womb.

- Calvino, Italo

There is no such thing as an ugly language. Today I hear every language as if it were the only one, and when I hear of one that is dying, it overwhelms me as though it were the death of the earth.

- Canetti, Elias

It is a mass language only in the same sense that its baseball slang is born of baseball players. That is, it is a language which is being molded by writers to do delicate things and

yet be within the grasp of superficially educated people. It is not a natural growth, much as its proletarian writers would like to think so. But compared with it at its best, English has reached the Alexandrian stage of formalism and decay.

- Chandler, Raymond

To have another language is to possess a second soul.

- Charlemagne

I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women, French to men and German to my horse.

- Charles V

If English is spoken in heaven. God undoubtedly employs Cranmer as his speechwriter. The angels of the lesser ministries probably use the language of the New English Bible and the Alternative Service Book for internal memos.

- Charles, Prince Of Wales

Language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied. Even the interpretation and use of words involves a process of free creation.

- Chomsky, Noam

One does not inhabit a country; one inhabits a language. That is our country, our fatherland --and no other.

- Cioran, E. M.

Language is the armory of the human mind, and at once contains the trophies of its past and the weapons of its future conquests.

- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor

As the language of the face is universal, so 'tis very comprehensive; no laconism can reach it: 'Tis the short hand of the mind, and crowds a great deal in a little room

- Collier, Jeremy

To a teacher of languages there comes a time when the world is but a place of many words and man appears a mere talking animal not much more wonderful than a parrot.

- Conrad, Joseph

The common faults of American language are an ambition of effect, a want of simplicity, and a turgid abuse of terms.

- Cooper, James F.

And who in time knows whither we may vent the treasure of our tongue, to what strange shores this gain of our best glories shall be sent, 't unknowing Nations with our stores? What worlds in the yet unformed Occident may come refined with the accents that are ours?

- Daniel, Samuel

Even if you do learn to speak correct English, whom are you going to speak it to?

- Darrow, Clarence

It is still not enough for language to have clarity and content... it must also have a goal and an imperative. Otherwise from language we descend to chatter, from chatter to babble and from babble to confusion.

- Daumal, Rene

Language is not only the vehicle of thought, it is a great and efficient instrument in thinking.

- Davy, Sir Humphrey

The individual's whole experience is built upon the plan of his language.

- Delacroix, Henri

Male supremacy is fused into the language, so that every sentence both heralds and affirms it.

- Dworkin, Andrea

There is the fear, common to all English-only speakers, that the chief purpose of foreign languages is to make fun of us. Otherwise, you know, why not just come out and say it?

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

The words of language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The physical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images.

- Einstein, Albert

Might, could, would --they are contemptible auxiliaries.

- Eliot, George

The finest language is mostly made up of simple unimposing words.

- Eliot, George

I like to be beholden to the great metropolitan English speech, the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven.

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo

Language is the archives of history.

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo

Language is a city to the building of which every human being brought a stone.

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo

The language of truth is simple.

- Euripides

I ascribe a basic importance to the phenomenon of language. To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization.

- Fanon, Frantz

The learned fool writes his nonsense in better language than the unlearned, but it is still nonsense.

- Franklin, Benjamin

Words are the leaves of the tree of language, of which, if some fall away, a new succession takes their place.

- French, John

Those who know nothing of foreign languages, knows nothing of their own.

- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang Von

Public speaking is done in the public tongue, the national or tribal language; and the language of our tribe is the men's language. Of course women learn it. We're not dumb. If you can tell Margaret Thatcher from Ronald Reagan, or Indira Gandhi from General Somoza, by anything they say, tell me how. This is a man's world, so it talks a man's language.

- Guin, Ursula K. Le

It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs.

- Hardy, Thomas

Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man.

- Heidegger, Martin

If the Romans had been obliged to learn Latin they would never have found time to conquer the world.

- Heine, Heinrich

The eyes have one language everywhere.

- Herbert, George

After all, when you come right down to it, how many people speak the same language even when they speak the same language?

- Hoban, Russell

Language is an archeological vehicle... the language we speak is a whole palimpsest of human effort and history.

- Hoban, Russell

The proverbial German phenomenon of the verb-at-the-end about which droll tales of absentminded professors who would begin a sentence, ramble on for an entire lecture, and then finish up by rattling off a string of verbs by which their audience, for whom the stack had long since lost its coherence, would be totally nonplussed, are told, is an excellent example of linguistic recursion.

- Hofstadter, Douglas

Life and language are alike sacred. Homicide and verbicide --that is, violent treatment of a word with fatal results to its legitimate meaning, which is its life --are alike forbidden.

- Holmes, Oliver Wendell

Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow.

- Holmes, Oliver Wendell

Grammar and logic free language from being at the mercy of the tone of voice. Grammar protects us against misunderstanding the sound of an uttered name; logic protects us against what we say have double meaning.

- Huessy, Rosenstock

To rescue from oblivion even a fragment of a language which men have used and which is in danger of being lost --that is to say, one of the elements, whether good or bad, which have shaped and complicated civilization --is to extend the scope of social observation and to serve civilization.

- Hugo, Victor

Language is the pedigree of nations.

- Johnson

Language most shows a man, speak that I may see thee.

- Johnson, Ben

Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas.

- Johnson, Samuel

I am always sorry when any language is lost, because languages are the pedigrees of nations.

- Johnson, Samuel

Language is the dress of thought.

- Johnson, Samuel

Language is political. That's why you and me, my Brother and Sister, that's why we supposed to choke our natural self into the weird, lying, barbarous, unreal, white speech and writing habits that the schools lay down like holy law. Because, in other words, the powerful don't play; they mean to keep that power, and those who are the powerless (you and me) better shape up --mimic/ape/suck --in the very image of the powerful, or the

powerful will destroy you --you and our children.

- Jordan, June

Writing in English is the most ingenious torture ever devised for sins committed in previous lives. The English reading public explains the reason why.

- Joyce, James

Language is the mother of thought, not its handmaiden.

- Kraus, Karl

Language is a form of human reason, which has its internal logic of which man knows nothing.

- Levi-Strauss, Claude

Language is the inventory of human experience.

- Lockhart, L. W.

Any language is necessarily a finite system applied with different degrees of creativity to an infinite variety of situations, and most of the words and phrases we use are prefabricated in the sense that we don't coin new ones every time we speak.

- Lodge, David

No literature is complete until the language it was written in is dead.

- Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth

Language, the machine of the poet, is best fitted for his purpose in its rudest state.

Nations, like individuals, first perceive, and then abstract. They advance from particular images to general terms. Hence the vocabulary of an enlightened society is philosophical, that of a half-civilized people is poetical.

- Macaulay, Thomas B.

Curiously enough, it seems to be only in describing a mode of language which does not mean what it says that one can actually say what one means.

- Man, Paul De

An art whose medium is language will always show a high degree of critical creativeness, for speech is itself a critique of life: it names, it characterizes, it passes judgment, in that it creates.

- Mann, Thomas

Syntax and vocabulary are overwhelming constraints --the rules that run us. Language is using us to talk --we think we're using the language, but language is doing the thinking, we're its slavish agents.

- Mathews, Harry

There is in every child a painstaking teacher, so skilful that he obtains identical results in all children in all parts of the world. The only language men ever speak perfectly is the

one they learn in babyhood, when no one can teach them anything!

- Montessori, Maria

Poetry is all nouns and verbs.

- Moore, Marianne

Language is the Rubicon that divides man from beast.

- Muller, Max

The problems of society will also be the problems of the predominant language of that society. It is the carrier of its perceptions, its attitudes, and its goals, for through it, the speakers absorb entrenched attitudes. The guilt of English then must be recognized and appreciated before its continued use can be advocated.

- Ndebele, Njabulo

The significance of language for the evolution of culture lies in this, that mankind set up in language a separate world beside the other world, a place it took to be so firmly set that, standing upon it, it could lift the rest of the world off its hinges and make itself master of it. To the extent that man has for long ages believed in the concepts and names of things as in aeternae veritates he has appropriated to himself that pride by which he raised himself above the animal: he really thought that in language he possessed knowledge of the world.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich

To write or even speak English is not a science but an art. There are no reliable words. Whoever writes English is involved in a struggle that never lets up even for a sentence. He is struggling against vagueness, against obscurity, against the lure of the decorative adjective, against the encroachment of Latin and Greek, and, above all, against the worn-out phrases and dead metaphors with which the language is cluttered up.

- Orwell, George

The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink.

- Orwell, George

Language ought to be the joint creation of poets and manual workers.

- Orwell, George

We invent the world through language. The world occurs through language.

- Pancoast, Mal

Man, even man debased by the neocapitalism and pseudosocialism of our time, is a marvelous being because he sometimes speaks. Language is the mark, the sign, not of his fall but of his original innocence. Through the Word we may regain the lost kingdom and recover powers we possessed in the far-distant past.

- Paz, Octavio

I wonder what language truck drivers are using, now that everyone is using theirs?

- Pfizer, Sydney

You can't write about people out of textbooks, and you can't use jargon. You have to speak clearly and simply and purely in a language that a six-year-old child can understand; and yet have the meanings and the overtones of language, and the implications, that appeal to the highest intelligence.

- Porter, Katherine Anne

We might hypothetically possess ourselves of every technological resource on the North American continent, but as long as our language is inadequate, our vision remains formless, our thinking and feeling are still running in the old cycles, our process may be revolutionary but not transformative.

- Rich, Adrienne

When a language creates -- as it does -- a community within the present, it does so only by courtesy of a community between the present and the past.

- Ricks, Christopher

My God! The English language is a form of communication! Conversation isn't just crossfire where you shoot and get shot at! Where you've got to duck for your life and aim to kill! Words aren't only bombs and bullets -- no, they're little gifts, containing meanings!

- Roth, Philip

If you want to tell the untold stories, if you want to give voice to the voiceless, you've got to find a language. Which goes for film as well as prose, for documentary as well as autobiography. Use the wrong language, and you're dumb and blind.

- Rushdie, Salman

The secret of language is the secret of sympathy and its full charm is possible only to the gentle.

- Ruskin, John

Language furnishes the best proof that a law accepted by a community is a thing that is tolerated and not a rule to which all freely consent.

- Saussure, Ferdinand De

A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas.

- Saussure, Ferdinand De

The word of man is the most durable of all material.

- Schopenhauer, Arthur

It was Greek to me.

- Shakespeare, William

The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it.

- Shaw, George Bernard

If the announcer can produce the impression that he is a gentlemen, he may pronounce as he pleases.

- Shaw, George Bernard

Language can only deal meaningfully with a special, restricted segment of reality. The rest, and it is presumably the much larger part, is silence.

- Steiner, George

We are armed with language adequate to describe each leaf of the forest, but not to describe human character.

- Thoreau, Henry David

Our language has wisely sensed the two sides of being alone. It has created the word loneliness to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word solitude to express the glory of being alone.

- Tillich, Paul

The genius of democracies is seen not only in the great number of new words introduced but even more in the new ideas they express.

- Tocqueville, Alexis De

I wish life was not so short, he thought. languages take such a time, and so do all the things one wants to know about.

- Tolkien, J. R.

Man invented language to satisfy his deep need to complain.

- Tomlin, Lily

Language is the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved. It has arrested ten thousand lightning flashes of genius, which, unless thus fixed and arrested, might have been as bright, but would have also been as quickly passing and perishing, as the lightning.

- Trench, Richard Chevenix

There is no such thing as the Queen's English. The property has gone into the hands of a joint stock company and we own the bulk of the shares!

- Twain, Mark

How many languages are there in the world? How about 5 billion! Each of us talks, listens, and thinks in his/her own special language that has been shaped by our culture, experiences, profession, personality, mores and attitudes. The chances of us meeting someone else who talks the exact same language is pretty remote.

- Unknown, Source

The universal principle of etymology in all languages: words are carried over from bodies and from the properties of bodies to express the things of the mind and spirit. The order of ideas must follow the order of things.

- Vico, Giambattista

As societies grow decadent, the language grows decadent, too. Words are used to disguise, not to illuminate, action: you liberate a city by destroying it. Words are to confuse, so that at election time people will solemnly vote against their own interests

- Vidal, Gore

The English language is nobody's special property. It is the property of the imagination: it is the property of the language itself.

- Walcott, Derek

We don't just borrow words; on occasion, English has pursued other languages down alleyways to beat them unconscious and rifle their pockets for new vocabulary.

- Washington, Booker T.

A mind enclosed in language is in prison.

- Weil, Simone

Numbers constitute the only universal language.

- West, Nathanael

The living language is like a cowpath: it is the creation of the cows themselves, who, having created it, follow it or depart from it according to their whims or their needs. From daily use, the path undergoes change. A cow is under no obligation to stay

- White, Elwyn Brooks

Viewed freely, the English language is the accretion and growth of every dialect, race, and range of time, and is both the free and compacted composition of all.

- Whitman, Walt

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language. Language is not simply a reporting device for experience but a defining framework for it.

- Whorf, Benjamin Lee

Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about.

- Whorf, Benjamin Lee

We have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language.

- Wilde, Oscar

As advertising blather becomes the nation's normal idiom, language becomes printed

noise.

- Will, George F.

Poetry is the language of feeling.

- Winter, W.

Language is a part of our organism and no less complicated than it.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig

If we spoke a different language, we would perceive a somewhat different world.

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig

Methinks the human method of expression by sound of tongue is very elementary, and ought to be substituted for some ingenious invention which should be able to give vent to at least six coherent sentences at once.

- Woolf, Virginia

Think like a wise man but communicate in the language of the people.

- Yeats, William Butler

Language is a dangerous tool, that when misused, can result in nonsense.

- Wakcher, Michael

How astonishing it is that language can almost mean, and frightening that it does not quite.

- Gilbert, Jack





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